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RUSSIA FROM ITS BALTIC WINDOW

BY JOHN A. GADE

FEW tragedies equal that of the Russian nation today and no people is worthier of understanding and sympathy. After fighting for the Allied cause, they had left on the battlefield more dead than France, Great Britain and Germany together, and yet today Russia is no longer even mentioned as an Ally, its military effort is sneered at or reviled by those who should in justice feel for her the deepest gratitude.

Tens of thousands of Russian patriots, belonging to all classes, are wandering helplessly from one Scandinavian country to another or drifting through European capitals, if they still have sufficient funds to pay their boarding-house bills. They dare not return to their native country when only starvation or shooting would be their lot. For the last two years their position has been hopeless. But whither could they go? Every Minister, Commissioner and Consul to whom they had applied for a visa had answered, "No passports for Russian Emigrés". They were not wanted, these men and women without a country who had sold to the Jews their last reserves of linen and household effects. Thousands of the soldiers and officers would have been only too glad, in spite of typhus and scanty provisions, to join the ill-advised and ill-starred armies of Judenitch, Koltchak and Denikin. They would have fought for any forlorn hope which meant for them temporary bread and butter, clothes and shoes and the liberation of Russia. Scores of officers of the former Imperial Navy have begged me to get them into the new American Merchant Marine as able-bodied seamen, and intelligent, highly educated women have implored me to find them places as household servants in the United States, where they had heard that the domestic servant-question had become a difficult problem.

I often faced the tragedy of actual starvation where there had been abundance before the great war. Nor was it only those

who had possessed the riches of this earth, but more often the widows and children of the endless former government officials who had lived upon their modest pensions, or others whose funds, owing to the devaluation of the rouble, had dwindled to nothing; many whose supporters had vanished among the slaughtered millions, anywhere between Omsk, the Black Sea, the Mazurian Lakes, and Archangel; and those who had to flee in the darkness from all they owned.

They have now given up hope of any assistance from the Allies, but they still believe, curiously enough, that rich America will ultimately, in some manner of her own, come to the rescue of their country. We are still keeping hundreds of thousands of children alive and we are still considered idealists as well as merchants. Rightly or wrongly, they do not think selfish gain so strong a motive with us as in European countries nearer to concessions and the markets of the former Russian Empire.

And those inside of Red Russia! There are about a hundred and fifty million Russians in Europe and only about six hundred and twenty thousand Communists. It is as if the city of Buffalo owned all the weapons and ammunition, controlled tribunals, directed every plant and industry, ruled the army and navy and ordered the policies of the entire United States.

But why do the people submit? Why do they not rebel and throw off the tyrannous yoke of so small a minority?

First of all, because of the utter lack of coöperation and homogeneity between the various cities, provinces and states of this enormous country, where eighty different tongues are spoken and the ruling policy has been to sharpen racial differences and stimulate old animosities instead of seeking to weld together into one great national fabric the many races dwelling in Russia.

Furthermore, the entire machinery of government—post, telegraph, press and railroads—was early seized by the few, and it is now too late to get them back. Independent thought cannot travel where physical motion is allowed only to the highly favored and richly bribing servants of the Soviet Government. The *intelligenza* and bourgeoisie are now as incapable of action as a patient recovering consciousness from the operating table. The peasants, some hundred and thirty-five million of them, live

so independently and isolated, scattered throughout the vast plains and boundless forests, that they have no knowledge of or interest in the doings of the great industrial centres. They bother their heads little about the endless ordinances.

To a certain extent the peasants are better off than they were before. They certainly have many more comforts and they are not starving as are the city folk. The improvement in their lot they do not owe to the Bolsheviki, but to the Revolution which preceded and resulted in the all-Russian constituent Assembly. This, and not the Soviet Government, declared: "The use of all land, mines, forests and waters is free to all citizens of the Russian republic regardless of nationality or Creed." The "Red Robbers" system, by which the Soviet Government redistributed the land, allowed the most powerful to seize the lion's share. Of course they have changed their modes of living. They grow no more flax, wheat or vegetables than what is needed for their own wants, and of that, they bury in the safest place all but the smallest quantity. Prowling and requisitioning Commissars and Government agents have until now forced them at the point of the bayonet to give up all the surplus they could find. All their horses and cows have been taken except a single one. It was obedience or the bullet.

The peasants have either themselves seized the land of their old masters or landlords, or had it doled out to them by the Government, which has retained some four per cent for Communist uses. In either case, they are very uneasy as to their title, and, valuing land above all else, are most anxious to hand it on to their children.

The Government has not yet felt sufficiently strong to tell them outright that it is not theirs to have and to hold, as all land has been nationalized and belongs to the Government. They loathe service in the Red armies, fighting where they have no grudge and in regiments filled with political agents, the very Commander subject to the orders of the Commissar accompanying every regiment. The political education back of the lines bored them to death. I have read many of their letters taken out of captured mails, and it was always the same story.

They could feel the necessity of fighting against the White

armies when they were told that these would, if victorious, merely bring back the old, reactionary days. They would also gladly fight against the old arch enemy, Poland.

The Red armies, which I saw in the field, consisted principally of peasant lads, docile, filthy, kindly and patient when captured. Once behind their opponent's fighting line, they needed no guards, for they were only too grateful to escape from bullets, and most of all from their taskmasters. Many from the cities had joined to get better pay and the largest rationing of food and clothes. Scores of them made my halls and staircases malodorous and lousy, but they were glad to shovel snow and saw wood all day long for a dinner and a whiff of tobacco. If nothing else could be found, they were quite willing, as soon as the Communists had been weeded out and disposed of, to join the regiments fighting against their former units. Judenitch's army numbered, when half way towards Petrograd, as many who had been Bolshevik soldiers a few weeks before, as "White" soldiers of its own. No arm of defense was needed when among them, as there was no danger of treachery or violence.

They were miserable fighters, but how could they be otherwise? Their officers, most of them of Imperial regiments, had been forced to assume commands or to starve to death themselves and leave their families to persecution. No one deserves more pity than these gallant gentlemen! Brusiloff's name was extensively employed in Bolshevik despatches and the wireless reports of the "Rosta", as the Commander-in-Chief operating against Poland. This was only propaganda. Brusiloff, instead of planning attacks and covering retreats, was in reality practically a prisoner in his own house, with a trusted Communist guard in front of his doorstep and another, equally trusted, to accompany him with loaded rifle whenever he might ask permission to leave his "headquarters".

Up to the offensive against Warsaw, practically every Bolshevik victory has either been due to the very perfect propaganda carried on back of it, and within the enemy's lines, or to the military inefficiency and maladministration of the conquered territory on the part of the forces contending against the Reds.

Judenitch's defeat was due, among other causes, to the folly of

undertaking alone the Petrograd attack when it had been planned as a link in the common campaign of Finnish, Esthonian, Russian and Latvian forces. British naval guns being unable from insufficient numbers and ammunition to demolish those of Krasnaia Gorka, the left flank was left exposed and when no Latvian army advanced, the right flank was equally unprotected. Fear and idle talk had estranged Esthonian sympathies. Entire lack of properly organized commissariat and lines of communications left the army unfed while crossing a friendly but starving territory. All lack of staff work added to the dilemma. Patriotism alone could not win victory even when within sight of the cupolas of Petrograd.

Thus another great Bolshevik victory was celebrated by the Communist leaders, who in the last days had led out solid Communist regiments, daring to depend on no other troops, when the enemy was so near the walls of the Capital.

The hour has passed when the Soviet Government can be overthrown by a small unit of well-officered, West European or American soldiers, adequately provided with arms, ammunition and supplies. Such an attack, easy a year ago, would now be as stupid from a political as from a military point of view, even if Western statesmen dared whisper it in their Cabinets.

Those of us who believe Bolshevism to be a world peril must fight it with other than military means.

American ignorance as to the true state of affairs inside of Red Russia is to a certain extent due to the fact that the truth has seldom been told by those who have been allowed to see and hear for themselves.

Our Departments of State and Justice and Office of Military Intelligence have been excellently informed at all times, but can act neither as lecturing bureaus nor journalists. Such information as the Soviet Government sends abroad is either visionary or false. The details furnished by escaped prisoners or released foreigners are pretty certainly colored or prejudiced. The Reverend Mr. North's accounts, as a rare instance, have been tempered and accurate. They coincided with all other reliable evidence. Unfortunately the great majority of such newspaper correspondents as have been admitted to Soviet Russia during the last half year have had their records carefully investigated before-

hand by competent Bolshevik authorities, who have felt sure that under the guidance assigned them these reporters would send out nothing detrimental to the Bolshevik cause.

Their lodgings in Moscow have been guarded, and every step they have taken. They have lived together in specially designed lodgings and much of what they have seen and heard has been carefully staged for their particular benefit. They have readily been furnished with proper answers to their questions. Every one of their telegrams, prior to being sent out by the wireless, is carefully censored by the press-bureau or one of Tchicherin's own secretaries. One excellent correspondent after the other, Fleurot, of *The New York World*, Duranty, of *The New York Times*, McKenzie, of a London paper, were all refused admittance. One of our well-known American journalists who telegraphed many a rosy account of the conditions he found in Soviet Russia, called at my office in Riga before leaving the country. I had received, several times a week, reports quite at variance with the telegrams he had been sending his paper, all of which had also passed through my hands. I questioned him both as to his impressions in general as well as to the accuracy of what he had sent out for "home consumption".

"Well, I should have been thrown out had I wired anything else", he replied, "and then, too, I want to go back."

Very few have come out of Russia recently who have had opportunities to judge men and events, who have been allowed to see the entire horizon and thus been capable of drawing unbiased conclusions.

The true state of affairs is so pathetic in its utter failure and so terrible in its results to innocent millions that it would scarcely be believed were it to be laid bare in its awful reality. There is no freedom of press, speech nor action.

The attribution of starvation to the blockade has been a potent political weapon in the hands of the Soviet leaders. Esthonia was the first to conclude peace and commence trading with the Bolsheviks, and this first break "in the iron ring encircling suffering Russia" was used by its Government for propaganda purposes. Sweden, Denmark and Norway are now following suit, and lastly American merchants, under certain con-

ditions carefully laid down by the State Department. English and Soviet representatives are at work on the same subject.

As a fact, it matters but little, from a business point of view, whether the blockade is at present raised or not. It has for a long time amounted to little or nothing; arms and ammunition and "materials susceptible of immediate use for war purposes" are about all that have been barred importation into Russia by the British destroyers guarding the free channels in the Baltic and elsewhere. The Allies have recently laid no hindrance in the way of other countries that were anxious to get Russian gold for their exports.

Esthonia has sent many a small consignment, Denmark has supplied seeds, Sweden, agricultural machinery and tools and Norway has sent fish. What *does* matter enormously is whether locomotives or rolling stock or separate parts come under the classification of "materials susceptible of immediate use for war purposes", whether they will be used for such purposes either by the Soviet Government itself or, for instance, by Esthonia, who is begging for American engines although she has all she herself needs from the booty turned over to her by Judenitch's army, and who is more than willing to pay any price for them in Russian gold roubles.

As long as the present Russian Government has neither been recognized *de jure* or *de facto* it has no right to dispose of gold borrowed by the late Imperial Russian Government, and principally from France since the year 1888. There is no question, if any of it is to be paid out, but that it belongs to Russia's creditors and to no one else. Russia has no other means of payment. There are no large stocks of wheat, flax, hides, or platinum. The Russians themselves are in terrible need of such raw stuffs as there are, and would never permit their export; and, finally, had they more than enough for themselves, all transportation is so utterly paralysed that there is no way of getting them out of the country. Trading has, in other words, been made impossible. For its resumption foreign capital, native brains and tersely directed, experienced native labor are all required in Russia. The first is under the present Government unimaginable, the last two have been incapacitated or destroyed. Neither Americans nor any other foreigners except Germans could successfully run Russian

industries, for they understand too little of the Russian character and their manner of doing business. All business is based upon credit and confidence. These would be impossible in dealing with the only merchant left in Russia, namely the Government. The only agreement now acceptable to outside merchants would be on the basis of "cash or raw stuffs down", and the Soviet Government, well aware of its business reputation, sees the necessity of offering these terms. Her able trade commissioners have been instructed to spare no effort to offer every inducement that Russia may obtain what she so sorely needs from America first of all, and then from England. If America will not sell, England must be employed as middleman, whatever commissions are demanded. Gold must be offered if raw stuffs are not believed to exist, and the bugbear of Germany capturing orders and markets must constantly be held up to the Allied and American Governments and merchants.

Of course Krassin's real errand to England, though *soi-disant* trade, was in reality to secure the establishment of commercial relations on such a footing that it would imply a recognition of the Soviet Government. In dealing with Lloyd George, Krassin knew what strong weapons he held. To meet this very situation and if possible force England to agreement, the Soviet Government, and particularly Lenin, aided by Radek, had, during the last six months, directed all their energies towards the development of the Moscow school for Eastern propaganda. It has become a great university where hundreds of able Orientals are taught the best methods of fomenting rebellion and sowing the seeds of Bolshevism throughout Britain's Asiatic possessions. The great Turkish leaders were there, those influential in the Caucasus as well as scores of those most likely to succeed in Persia, Afghanistan, Palestine, Thibet, India and China. Millions of roubles have been spent in printing proclamations in the various Asiatic tongues and the work has been done so skilfully and thoroughly and sedition spread so fast that Krassin, when he started for London, felt that for once Great Britain might successfully be threatened. A test case was made by one of the Powers, to see if it were not possible to ship out to a Baltic port 5000 tons of wheat rotting in its warehouse. It proved a failure.

Nothing arrived after eight weeks of desperate effort on the part of the Commissioner of Transportation.

There are at present two groups of leaders in Soviet Russia. Krassin is an excellent representative of the one, and both realize clearly that under present economical conditions Russia cannot stagger long without outside help. The labor armies from which so much had been hoped have proved a failure. Even such an utter abandonment of communistic principles as the reintroduction of directorate management in the factories and skilled supervision by expert bourgeois had not met with success, for directors were lacking, and technically trained managers were also few and far between. Neither threats of punishment nor promises of gain had availed to bring back skilled laborers to the industrial plants or retain those already there. Outside help must be obtained. First of all, willing German managers. If not, down would go the many new officials and the class enriched by Bolshevik plunder. For them, as for Krassin, the only salvation seems foreign capital and the abhorred capitalist methods. This must not be openly stated, but it can be brought about by offering such concessions to foreign capital that the large foreign syndical interests will force their Governments to yield. The Soviet leaders in question are willing to sell Russia to save their own jobs, pocketbooks and future. Most of them, after the first hey-day of plunder, did not betimes send sufficient sums abroad to keep the wolf later from the door. Theirs is not the faith of Lenin or Trotzky; they have been trained in too sensible and practical a school, and they see that from all economic standpoints—volume of production, rate of employment, prices and profits and losses—nationalization has failed. The laborer has as thoroughly become a government serf as were the former peasants under the landlords of the eighteenth century.

The country that can today adhere to its standard of morality and refrain from business dealings with the Soviet Government will ultimately find that Russian merchants will turn to it in the future, as to no others, with confidence and rich opportunities. All others will be repudiated.

Krassin is a far abler man than Litvinoff who began negotia-

tions with the British commercial representative in Copenhagen.

I have been told that Litvinoff, shortly after negotiations had been opened, said to a British representative that in case England did not see her way clear to a conciliatory trade-policy, he, Litvinoff, was afraid that public opinion in Moscow might become so inflamed that the Government could not answer for the lives of such British officers as were still imprisoned in Russia. The Englishman drew himself up and replied that any British officer would be glad to die rather than have his country threatened. Commissar of Trade and Communications, Krassin, would never have been guilty of such a *faux-pas*, though his record, like that of most of the Soviet leaders, is a very unsavory one. After being jailed in Finland, he was released through pressure from extremely influential German sources. He went to Germany, received there an excellent technical training and then entered the employ of the great Siemens-Schuckert Electrical Combine. From there he was sent to Petrograd as its branch manager and one of the German Government's secret agents. His marked abilities were soon apparent and he was instrumental in the combination of the two large metallurgical companies and deep in the Russian-Asiatic Bank tangle. Germany, determining to break Russia and the eastern front by the development and spread of Bolshevism, Krassin became a more than useful servant in his dealings with the leading Communist agitators then busily sowing the seed that was to convulse Russia. Many an agent went back and forth to Copenhagen for German money, propaganda and advice, receiving his last instructions from Krassin, before leaving Petrograd.

Since writing the foregoing, events have moved fast in Russia. Crushing Polish victories practically annihilated the Bolshevik Western armies, the Poles have seized Lithuanian portions of Suwalki and the Grodno-Vilna railroad with its city and territory, recognized by Soviet Russia in its peace treaty as belonging to Lithuania, Latvia has signed peace with Soviet Russia, the *Cordon Sanitaire* has once more been reëstablished along Soviet Russia's Western frontiers, and the Ukraine has nibbled

off bit after bit of Soviet territory. Wrangel has been defeated. The peace of Rega has been signed.

We see from the last reports of the Supreme Council of National Economy that instead of 400 million poods¹ of grain, which it considers indispensable for the winter's supply, only 30 million poods had been received by September and only 15 million more might be expected.

The terms of the Peace of Riga indicate how complete was the Polish victory. They may almost be classed with those the Bolshevik leaders were forced to sign at Brest-Litovsk, and are, from the victor's side, unquestionably ill-advised.

Soviet Russia has been driven to abandon the endless trickery and chicanery it has practised in dragging out negotiations for the repatriation of the French and English subjects held in Russian prisons. They have been liberated, and the brave, starved victims returned to their native countries. Reports of mutinies and riots in Moscow and Petrograd become more frequent, the peasants are constantly taking matters more and more into their own hands, and we see independent Communal Government arising, while such power as the centralised Government had is on the wane.

The reports of foreign contracts successfully made by trade Commissars having proved false, there is no longer any basis for new contracts with European and American business men. Our own Government authorities have spiked little Esthonia's guns by stopping the delivery of the American locomotives purchased in France which would either directly, or by the release of others, have passed from Reval over Narva and Jamburg eastward. Even German eyes have been opened. The best evidence of this comes from the Deutsch-Ost-Europaeischer Wirtschaftsverbund, the powerful German society which aims at developing Russo-German commercial relations, and is of particular importance through its connection with most of the German exporters of machinery, upon which the Bolshevik Commissioners abroad placed such great hopes. In the secret report of its meeting, held at Elberfeldt, June 26th (at that time, the Bolsheviks were rapidly approaching Warsaw, Kopp

¹ 1 pood = 36 pounds.

was riding a high horse in Berlin, and Simon's appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs also warranted Bolshevist optimism) Rode, the President of the "German East-European", laid clearly and emphatically before his hearers "the utter hopelessness of entering into any business relations whatever with the Russian Government, owing not only to its lack of materials, but its deceit and failure to fulfill promises". Meyer, the Executive Secretary, stated: "I do not think that in the near future it will be possible for private individuals to engage in the exchange of goods with Russia."

Even the greediest and those readiest to exploit Russia have, in other words, been disillusioned during the last months as to what might be grabbed or procured, now or for the future, at the expense of a ruined nation.

The recent disclosures as to the amount of paper issued by Russia stagger belief. The figures are astronomical. Up to January 1st, 1920, a grand total of 222,500,000,000 roubles had been issued in paper money by Russia, and during the first three months of the year this was followed by 115 billion more, or at the rate of more than a billion roubles a day. Gukowski's cynic avowal sums up the situation: "No revenue can cover our expenditures—only one thing remains to be done—to issue paper money, *ad infinitum*".

Tchicherin, in his answer to the note of the American Secretary of State, which outlined our Russian policy, carefully evades all the points at issue. It was intended to befog and deceive the poor proletariat.

Take any random statement in this reply, as for instance: "Mr. Colby wishes that there should be in Russia a bourgeois or capitalistic Government which would permit itself to be exploited by American financial groups. The policy of Soviet Russia is a policy of complete abolition of exploitation of the workers by the former owners of the means of production."

It is the present Russian Government which has opened the way for limitless exploitation. It has repeatedly offered and given concessions, first to the Hannevig group, then to Esthonia and Latvia in their peace treaties, then to British banking syndicates. Railroad concessions have been indirectly offered

to the United States which might have sold Russia, lock, stock and barrel, had we not had the decency and self-respect to hold aloof.

The agents of the Bolshevik Government have recently made even clearer to foreign politicians that it is not commercial relations which the Soviet Government is seeking for the relief of the suffering people, but the political recognition which follows the establishment of trade relations. Bertrand Russell hit the nail on the head in the account he gave of his interview with Lenin: "I felt", said Russell, "that he regarded the resumption of trade with capitalistic countries as a mere palliation of doubtful value".

JOHN A. GADE.